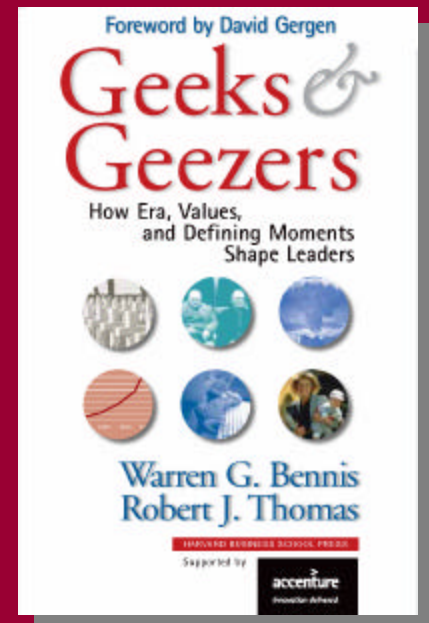




Geeks & Geezers:

How Era, Values, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders

Warren Bennis, Robert J. Thomas



Three questions give focus to the book



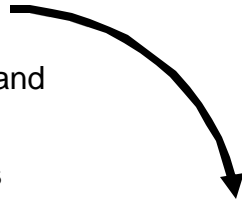
- What is the ***impact of the era*** in which a leader matures on how he/she behaves as a leader?
- How do people ***learn to lead?***
- How are some people able ***to lead for a lifetime?***

We began from the conventional starting point in leadership studies: individual factors; however, we hypothesized that era influenced leader behavior, too



Era

- Background events and trends
- Dominant institutions
- Cultural icons
- Socio-economic environment



Leadership behaviors

- Aspirations or motivations
- Expectations of oneself
- Response to expectations of others
- How they read/respond to situations

Individual factors

“The deck you’re dealt”

- Socio-economic class
- Family composition
- Gender/Race
- Genetic endowment/IQ
- Socialization



Two groups of leaders – one over 70 and the other under 35



Muriel Siebert



Robert Crandall



Mike Wallace



Harlan Hugh



Wendy Kopp



Frances Hesselbein



Elizabeth Kao



Sidney Harman



Fr. Robert Drinan



Elizabeth Altman



Nathaniel Jones



Jeff Wilke



*“I’ll have someone from my generation get in touch with
someone from your generation.”*

Maps vs. Compasses



"Sensemaking is about navigating by means of a compass rather than a map.

Maps, by definition, can help only in known worlds - worlds that have been charted before.

Compasses are helpful when you are not sure where you are and can get only a general sense of direction."

- Karl Weick



Differences



Robert Crandall
Retired Chairman of the Board,
American Airlines



Elizabeth Kao
Global Marketing Manager,
Ford Motor Company

Key differences between the two groups



Geezers

Making a Living

Stability and Security

Organization Man

Deliberate: “A Stitch in Time”

Mid-Life Crisis (in the 40s)

Work/Life Balance: “Huh?”

Entrepreneuring as Control

Innocence/Simplicity

Heroes Are Icons

Religion

Command and Control

Geeks

Making History

Change, Impermanence

Why Be Loyal?

Speed: 365/24/7 Life

“Quarter-Life Crisis” (in the 20s)

Work/Life Balance: Imperative

Entrepreneuring as Self-Expression

Savvy, World-Weary

Heroes Are Close at Hand

Spirituality

Participate, Engage, Collaborate

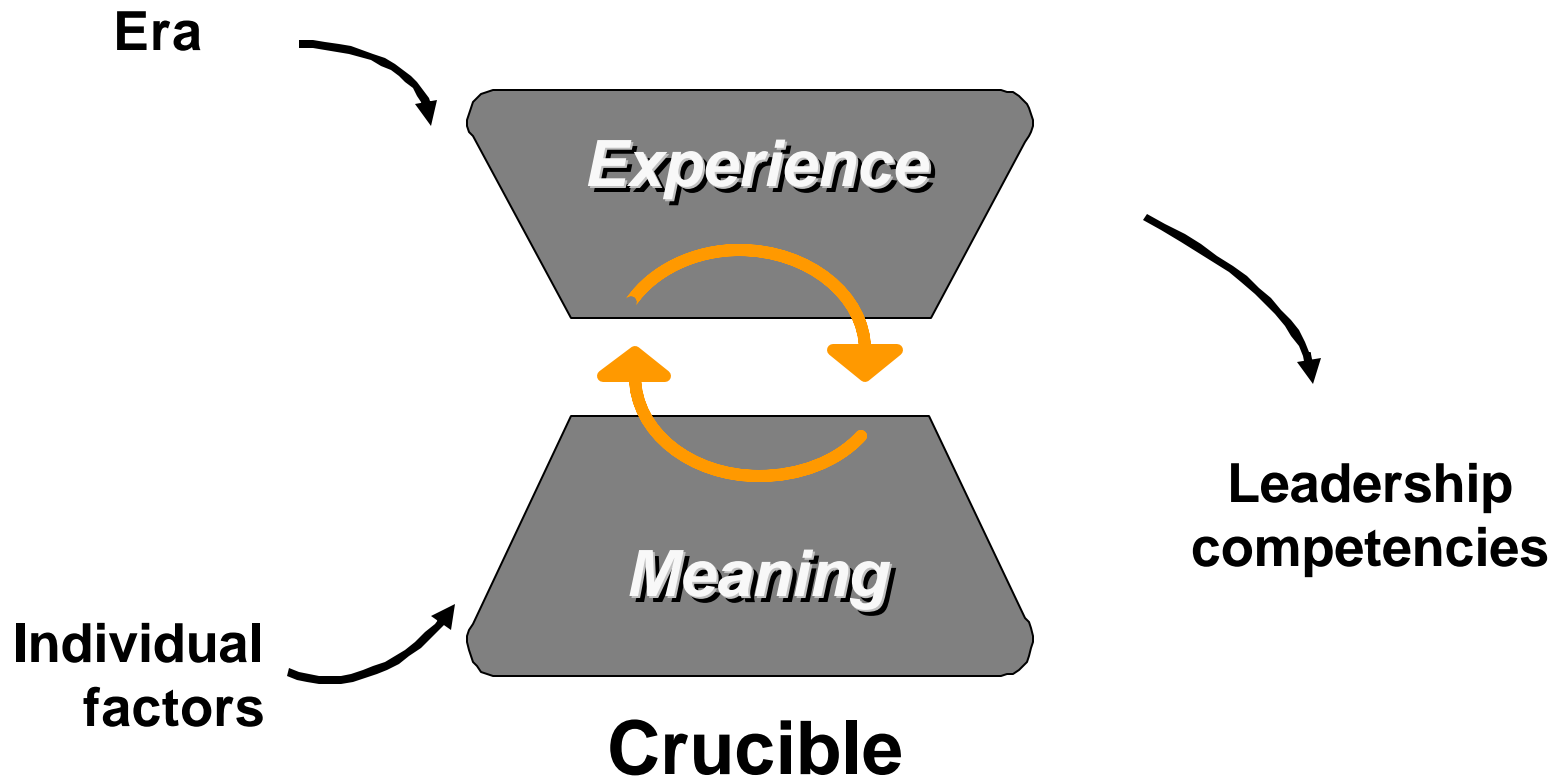
Similarities



- **Adaptive capacity**
- **Engaging others through shared meaning**
- **Voice**
- **Integrity**



Our interviews suggested a missing dimension in understanding how people develop and grow as leaders



“Experience is not so much what happens to you as what you *make* of what happens to you.” Aldous Huxley

Crucibles come in many shapes and sizes



- **Family**
- **Mountain climbing**
- **Brownies**
- **Bankruptcy**
- **Karate school**
- **Prison**
- **Picket line**
- **Being the first woman**
- **Mentors**
- **Convent**
- **Aftermath of disaster**
- **College**
- **Losing an election**
- **Civil rights movement**
- **WWII**
- **Boot camp**
- **Loss of a loved one**
- **Quelling a riot**

Learning to lead through crucible experiences -- a severe test of patience or belief; a trial



Judge Nathaniel Jones
6th Circuit Court of Appeals

**Crucible experiences
shape leaders in two
ways: *lessons
learned* and *learning
strategies***

Stimulating individual leadership learning



Preparing

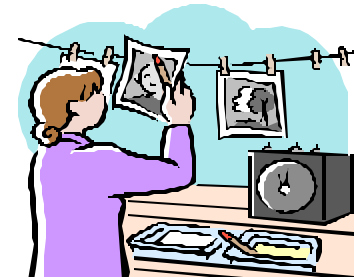
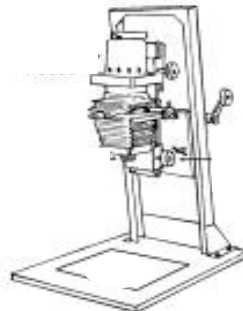
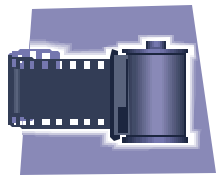
- Value clarification
- Learning styles
- Network building
- Motivation
- Being mentored

Developing

- Self-observation
- Emotional intelligence
- Practice while performing
- Being coached

Preserving

- Adaptive capacity
- Engaging others through shared meaning
- Voice
- Integrity



What to look for in potential leaders



People who ...

Adaptive capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have failed and recovered• work well across boundaries and groups• are able to admit they don't know something
Engage others through shared meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• whose silence attracts attention• make others laugh ... and who laugh at themselves• spend their energy finding opportunities instead of finding fault
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• live what they believe• choose their words carefully• test themselves before they test others
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• whose values are clear• are able to work with value conflicts, rather than shy from them• know when to lead and when to follow

Questions leaders should ask of themselves



Adaptive capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do I learn?• When do I find myself being the most creative?• How good am I at reading situations and people?
Engage others through shared meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well do I listen?• Am I a good storyteller?• Do I encourage dissent?
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do I stand for?• What do I need/want others to know about me?• How attuned am I to the needs of others?
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are my technical strengths and weaknesses as a leader?• What are my ambitions/what motivates me to lead?• What are my moral absolutes?• Do I hold these facets in balance?

Find ways to capitalize on crucibles for leader development



Adapting to foreign territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use rotational and foreign assignments – including ones outside the company – to enhance leadership capabilities• Establish learning maps with resources (software, eLearning support) to help people stay on track• Provide coaching to help personal learning during periods of intense change
Surviving disruption and loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on preparing people for adversity and challenge• Create safe failing spaces and opportunities for risk-taking• Use enhanced simulations (e.g., management flight simulators) to provide insight on the meaning of failure and recovery
Enforced reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiential cohorts that build a community and a critical network that supports reflection and introspection• Intensive use of video, shadowing, and peer coaching• Training in an avocation that involves real-time self-reflection
Intense mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Careful selection of mentors• Training for mentors in storytelling and listening• Careful matching of mentors and protégés (non-bureaucratic process)• Training for protégés in listening and storytelling• Cross-generational mentoring relationships

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